

ETL 212

Assignment 2
Case Study of a learner

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Introduction

The following is a case study of a Year 3 boy where a comprehensive assessment of literacy has been carried out with recommendations of strategies to develop all areas of literacy. For the purposes of this report, the student will be referred to as "Johnny".

Learner background

Johnny is an 8 year old boy from a mixed ability Year 3 class at Catholic co-educational primary school. After meeting and interacting with Johnny, I personally have found Johnny to be a pleasant boy who is well behaved and tries hard. Johnny's classroom teacher is of this same opinion.

Johnny's parents have noted that Johnny does not like school as he finds it "too hard" and they struggle to get him to complete his homework. Johnny's parents also informed me that due to his dislike of school, it has become an issue to get him to school without meeting some resistance. Johnny's teacher said that he appears to be fine when he is in the school environment and is usually interacting with someone however, Johnny does not have a "special" friend who he interacts with consistently. After a discussion with Johnny, I discovered he likes playing on computers, chess, drawing, building with lego and playing the x-box (especially with the next door neighbours). After sitting with Johnny in short episodes, it appeared that he was not interested in writing or reading and does it with haste and cannot wait to finish.

Johnny is currently under the care of a paediatrician and has recently undertaken several formal assessments, which has identified Johnny as having Central Auditory Processing Disorder "CAPD" together with evidence of learning difficulties and a secondary reactive school phobia and anxiety. In the CAPD test, it was recognised that Johnny has a scatter of abnormalities in the area of phonological awareness and memory processing, which is obviously contributing to his reading and learning difficulties. Johnny is currently

undertaking a "Fast for Word" program at school each morning for an hour to help develop his memory recall of sounds and identification of sounds.

Johnny's teacher has identified that he requires assistance and an explanation of tasks, especially if they require more than one step. Generally his math abilities are what are considered "normal" for his age and year level. He does however, run into issues completing math questions that require problem solving or a lot of reading / instruction. Johnny's teacher said that he has trouble with spelling and general writing activities however, his reading has slightly improved but lacks the comprehension, as he is too focused on reading the text and getting it right.

Given the background information about Johnny, I am expecting Johnny to be achieving at the early phase in literacy development as per figure 1.1 on page 6 in Hill, S (2010) (see raw data).

Overview of data collection (what, how, why, limitations)

Over a period of approximately 4 weeks a small amount of data was collected in each literacy area to ascertain and identify a baseline of each literacy domain on a developmental continuum. In collecting this data, various methods and contexts were utilized for example, 1:1 discussion, oral presentation, general classroom activities (writing journal), spelling test (Pat-R), direct questioning, listening and dictation, running record of reading and comprehension and very short written questionnaire. The limitations of these test are that they are at one point in time and can be subjective and variable depending on the mood of the child at the time. There is also the testing conditions that need to be taken into consideration.

Literacy profile:

Listening and speaking

Johnny undertook a dictation test in a formal testing situation in a classroom context to identify his listening, spelling and deciphering in context. The dictation test required Johnny to listen and write the passage down that was read out aloud. Johnny was able to

achieve an impressive 42 readable words, 3 missed words ("it", "and", "back") and 3 invented words with no evidence of unreadable or random words. This activity showed that Johnny is making connections and applying phonetics decoding strategies with his listening and writing.

In 1992, Derewianka suggests a way of assessing speaking, through listening to a child communicate in everyday situations. Derewianka calls this approach '*language as communication*' and to assess communication in the form of speaking is to identify the use of the following skills such as "*maintaining eye contact; employing appropriate body language and gestures nodding your head, using interesting facial expressions, engaging your audience, varying your delivery to maintain interest; and generally exuding confidence.*"

To assess Johnny's speaking, I observed him performing an oral presentation on sharks to his class cohort. During his oral presentation, Johnny displayed no apparent difficulty in conveying his information and maintained eye contact with the whole class. Johnny's use of communication was appropriate and functional for the context. Johnny showed signs of phonemic awareness through the use of enunciated words in an audible manner. Johnny also demonstrated ideal communication behaviour with his vocal and body language. Further to this oral presentation, during a 1:1 conversation with Johnny, he was able to retell his weekend in a logical sequential order. Once again, Johnny displayed appropriate functional means of communication and enunciation of words. He showed emotion and used a lot of hand gestures and used the correct grammatical tense during his discussion.

Based on the evidence from assessing and observing Johnny, he is falling into *Phase 4: Emergent Language for Learning*, based on the Overview of Oral Language Development Continuum. Ways to continue and foster further development would include opportunities for Johnny to listen, respond and retell stories, song and poems as suggested teaching strategies identified in the Oral Language Development Continuum.

Reading

To assess Johnny's reading, a Running Record was performed. This record identified that Johnny's instructional level is at Level 17 of The PM Benchmark System. This reading record showed that Johnny is able to read the text however, he is unable to retell the story or answer the comprehension questions adequately especially the inferential questions. However in saying this, when selecting a text to be read, the semantic background of the reader needs to be considered. In this instance of the Running Record, perhaps Johnny did not have any prior knowledge about BMX bikes? But then there is the argument of assessing the readers ability in decoding and making meaning from written text. During the reading assessment, Johnny read the text word-by-word and recognised the high-frequency words in the text. Johnny used graphophonic strategies to decode text-specific vocabulary, such as tricks, bike/s, racing, riders and identify the initial sound correctly. The Running Record has identified that when Johnny is reading, he is focusing on the words in the text to read and not reading to understand/learn. Another test that was performed was recognition of sight words. Johnny was tested on the Magic 200 words, and got 4 words incorrect. During this process, Johnny did employ phonetic decoding strategies for the 4 words that he got incorrect.

In 2005, Sousa discusses about how speaking is a natural and innate ability and reading is not, thus the need for explicit sequential teaching. There is a lot of literature published about how effective reading is developed. It has been identified and agreed upon by many authors and researchers that phonemic and phonological awareness is the initial and significantly important step in learning to read, Winch et al., (2010), Yopp (1992), Derewinka (1992) and Hill (2006)). This premise is also supported and has been identified by The National Reading Panel ('NRP') in the United States, as one of the effective strategies for learning to read. The NRP believe there are five important pillars to effective reading instruction. The five important areas that should be included in a reading program are: phonological and phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension.

The Running Record benchmark identified that Johnny is still developing his phonological and phonemic awareness, particularly when decoding unfamiliar words and his comprehension. Having the ability to decode and identify phonemes in words, will in turn help with his reading fluency and comprehension. Winch et al, (2010), pg. 91, delineated that background knowledge is a prerequisite of developing a reader's ability in comprehension. To develop Johnny's comprehension he needs to develop his general semantic knowledge. This may be difficult based on his lifestyle context, thus the importance of introducing the topic of the text to the reader before reading. An approach that teachers can utilise to develop a readers general everyday knowledge is by adopting the '*schema*' approach prior to a reading session and providing explicit teacher instruction and teaching and using prediction methods. By providing teaching opportunities prior to reading a text this is developing and increasing Johnny's vocabulary and word bank, which will also assist him in becoming more fluent in his reading.

Chohen & Cowen (2011) discusses adopting a balanced approach to literacy in a classroom environment by adhering to 13 principals of practice. In this literacy balance, one aspect that has been identified is to expose the reader to the four fundamentals of reading, such as, guided reading, independent reading, reading aloud and shared reading. Providing Johnny with these four fundamental reading experience will also develop his reading fluency, word bank, word recognition and comprehension skills. By providing conferences with Johnny before, during and after reading will help develop his understanding of texts and their content, word bank, semantic knowledge and reading fluency which in turn will help with his overall literal and inferential comprehension. The strategies that have been listed to help Johnny with his reading and comprehension and fall closely in alignment with the 'Nine successful strategies' described by Block and Parris (2008) for decoding the meaning of text as identified in Winch et al., (2010) pg 93.

Based on the evidence from assessing and observing Johnny, he is falling into *Phase 3: Early Reading*, based on the Overview of Reading Development Continuum. Ways to

continue and foster further development would include opportunities for Johnny to listen, respond and retell stories, and utilising the schema approach.

Writing

Writing

Harris (2003), argues that a writer is making and creating meaning through their written text as they have to utilise their language resources of semantic, syntactic and graphophonic information to write and create meaning. Based on Harris' opinion, Johnny's writing is evident of purpose (for his age and ability) for his audience (teacher), which is indicative in the content of conveying what he did on the holidays or on the weekend. The structure of Johnny's writing is able to be read by demonstrating knowledge of graphophonic information and conventions that he has also utilised to display correct spelling or close enough such as "kemping" for "camping".

In 2003, Harris discusses and raised an interesting point from a little boy's (Chris) perspective. When his mother asked him to write a story, the child asked if he should write a teacher/school story that started with either, "*I am; I live in a; I eat*". Johnny's writing samples appear to be for the teacher and lacks complexity and extension. For Johnny to use his resources of semantic, syntactic and graphophonic information, perhaps give Johnny sentence starters that will require to use his resources of semantic information and apply syntactic conventions to develop awareness and skill writing in other genre's. For example, "The picture on the wall" or "I like watching Star Wars because..." or "Dogs are better pets than cats because..." etc. Utilising this approach could also conform to Derewianka's functional approach to language as it is purposeful to the writer (Derewianka, B. 1990).

By using more exciting and fun teaching approaches to writing, Johnny may be more willing to explore in his writing and start to use compound and complex sentences. In addition to this, looking at grammatical concepts of and exploring adjectives and adverbials, will also help Johnny develop his sentence structure and content. These teaching strategies can be done through guided reading and writing lessons.

Punctuation /Grammar

As you can see from the writing samples, Johnny's writing is lacking punctuation. Johnny demonstrates the use of a capital in starting a sentence and for proper and personal nouns. He does however lack the ability to use a full stop (except at the very end of his writing). Johnny has not shown any evidence of understanding the use of speech marks (inverted comma's). Johnny needs explicit teaching in when to use a full stop, inverted comma's, use of connectives and general sentence structure. A plan to show Johnny how punctuation works and how it can shape meaning is to show punctuation in everyday situations such as books, articles, comic strips, etc. Punctuation needs to be shown in different genres and also in reading and writing experiences (real life/real world examples, fiction and non-fiction texts). Punctuation also needs to be a part of everyday teaching moments and not just a literacy times. A functional approach to this would be to start a punctuation poster. A punctuation poster will allow Johnny (and other students) to identify real life examples, from newspapers, menu's, books etc to help shape meaning and to see its use in the "real world" context.

Spelling

Johnny undertook a Pat-R Spelling test earlier in the year (February) and achieved a raw score of 2/20. Recently I had Johnny undertake this same spelling test to assess where he is at currently, this time Johnny achieved a raw score of 6/20. Looking at some of the words that Johnny got incorrect was a little bit fascinating considering he was able to read these same words as sight words without any hesitation or the need for decoding. For example, on both spelling tests he spelt the word "many" as "meny", but when you get him to read the sight word list, he is able to say instantaneously "many". Looking at another working sample such as the dictation test, you can see that Johnny is able to decipher the initial sound, but has trouble with the blending the medial sounds in each word that he struggled to spell. For example, "street" was spelt as "stret"; along was spelt as "alog"; left was spelt as "lfet". After reviewing these results you can see where Johnny is struggling with his spelling, which is the medial sound and the smaller phonemes (blends) and the

memory recall of these (which is linked with his CAPD). When you look at Johnny's writing sample dated, "Thursday 28th April", you can see that he has been able to spell the majority of the words correctly (particularly the sight words) and has attempted to decode the more difficult words for example, "camping" as "kemping", "nights" as "neits" and "neighbours" as "navers". Once again sight words such as "was" were spelt correctly in his writing sample, but not on his spelling test, it was spelt as "wash".

To assist Johnny with his spelling, a systematic approach will be needed but he will also require practice in connecting the spoken and written words. Winch et al., (2010), chapter 18, suggests a systematic approach to teaching spelling. It suggests that the following teaching instruction needs to be followed; *"knowledge of the alphabet, phonics, segmentation of words, syllable combinations, vowels and word meaning"*. However this approach will be more effective, if taught in a meaningful, fun and interactive approach. As a teacher, it is important to teach students different approaches in finding meaning and correct spelling of words in addition to direct teacher instruction of spelling tricks and rules. The use of guided writing and spelling session would also be useful in assisting with spelling along with general classroom literacy practices. In particular for Johnny, it would be beneficial to go back to learning the diagraphs and starting a sounds book with supporting pictures. For example the sound "ow" can be "ooh" as in bow tie around his neck and "ow" as in "oowah" and "ou" as in "shout". Overall, to assist with Johnny's writing, developing his word bank will improve his writing and spelling. Furthermore, the introduction of proof-reading skills will help develop his spelling and grammatical errors.

After reviewing Johnny's working samples he appears to be achieving at Phase 3: Phonetic Spelling on the Overview of Spelling Developmental Continuum.

Handwriting

After witnessing Johnny write a recount of his weekend, he displayed the following behaviour; wrote extremely fast; pressed down really hard on the paper; appear to be holding the pencil quite hard; face really close to the paper; tongue out the side; and kept squirming around in his seat. Some directives from here would be, reminding Johnny to

slow down when writing, get comfortable, and relax his grip. As for getting really close to the paper, let his parents know what behaviour he is exhibiting and ask if they have noticed him getting close to his book when reading or writing and suggest that perhaps it wouldn't hurt to have his eyes get checked by an optometrist if they felt he needed this course of action.

After reviewing several examples from Johnny's writing book, there is evidence of Johnny's ability to write neatly. At times it appears that he lacks the drive/willingness to always write legibly and neatly. In these same writing samples, Johnny is displaying a cursive writing style with some joins along with acceptable spacing between words. To develop Johnny's handwriting, some strategies that could be utilised would be explicit teaching of handwriting skills with follow up activities for homework. Winch et al., (2010) identified some activities that could be utilised for developing Johnny's handwriting for example, skills handwriting book, air writing/tracing, correct pencil grip and small/fine motor work to encourage fine motor skills.

After reviewing Johnny's working samples he appears to be achieving at the Year 3 developmental continuum as per the table 19.1 in Winch et al., (2010), Chapter 19, page 362.


Conclusion

All children learn at different rates, particularly since reading and writing is a skill that has to be taught unlike the innate ability to speak (Sousa, 2005). The theory behind teaching literacy is that it needs to be systematic (Winch et al., 2003), scaffolded and tailored to each individual student. Most importantly, the learning experience needs to be connected to the learners' world for it to be effective, relevant and most importantly building on what that child already knows (semantic information) (Hill, 2006).

As previously identified earlier in this report, I am still of the opinion that Johnny is currently meeting the "Early" phase in literacy development as per figure 1.1 on page 6 in Hill (2010).

Appendix - raw data

[illegible]



Today I played with my friends and my dog and my cat.

Went to the beach with my family and the kids. We went to the beach and the kids were the first to jump in the water. It was very warm. You went past the beach things very deep but I stayed under the beach. We were there for a while but we had to go home. When we got home I had a bath with my dog and my cat. Then I had to go to bed. This is my day.

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sleep instead
 new
many now
 big own
should infer fit
 discuss smell
 ready sing
 be careful
 wash
 water
^{day} raise
 worth
 slips
 chest
 next
 short

[illegible]

Overview of Oral Language Developmental Continuum

This continuum is based on the *Communication and Symbolic Skills Inventory* (CSSI) and the *Communication and Symbolic Skills Checklist* (CSSC) developed by the University of Washington. It is intended to provide a general overview of oral language development and is not intended to be used for diagnostic or assessment purposes.

Phase	Phase 1: Intentional Communication	Phase 2: Emergent Language for Thinking	Phase 3: Conventional Language for Thinking	Phase 4: Advanced Language for Thinking
Phase 1: Intentional Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intentional communication (e.g., pointing, reaching, showing) • Single word utterances (e.g., "mama", "dada") • Simple two-word utterances (e.g., "mama go") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple sentences (e.g., "I want that") • Simple questions (e.g., "Where is that?") • Simple answers (e.g., "Yes", "No") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Complex questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Complex answers (e.g., "Yes, because...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Advanced questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Advanced answers (e.g., "Yes, because...")
Phase 2: Emergent Language for Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple sentences (e.g., "I want that") • Simple questions (e.g., "Where is that?") • Simple answers (e.g., "Yes", "No") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Complex questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Complex answers (e.g., "Yes, because...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Advanced questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Advanced answers (e.g., "Yes, because...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very advanced sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Very advanced questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Very advanced answers (e.g., "Yes, because...")
Phase 3: Conventional Language for Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple sentences (e.g., "I want that") • Simple questions (e.g., "Where is that?") • Simple answers (e.g., "Yes", "No") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Complex questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Complex answers (e.g., "Yes, because...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Advanced questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Advanced answers (e.g., "Yes, because...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very advanced sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Very advanced questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Very advanced answers (e.g., "Yes, because...")
Phase 4: Advanced Language for Thinking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple sentences (e.g., "I want that") • Simple questions (e.g., "Where is that?") • Simple answers (e.g., "Yes", "No") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Complex questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Complex answers (e.g., "Yes, because...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advanced sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Advanced questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Advanced answers (e.g., "Yes, because...") 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very advanced sentences (e.g., "I want that because...") • Very advanced questions (e.g., "How many...?") • Very advanced answers (e.g., "Yes, because...")

Overview of Spelling Development Continuum

Phases

Phase 1: Emergent Spelling

Phase 2: Early Spelling

Phase 3: Intermediate Spelling

Phase 4: Advanced Spelling

Phase 5: Expert Spelling

Key Indicators

Major Teaching Strategies

Minor Teaching Strategies

Overview of Reading Development Continuum

Phases

Phase 1: Emergent Reading

Phase 2: Early Reading

Phase 3: Intermediate Reading

Phase 4: Advanced Reading

Phase 5: Expert Reading

Key Indicators

Major Teaching Strategies

Minor Teaching Strategies

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